

THE LORD'S OWN SALVATION NO. 2057

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 16, 1888,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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"But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."
Hosea 1:7.

GOD is very considerate towards the messengers by whom He delivers His word to men. They are bound to deliver His word faithfully, whatever the tidings may be. Sometimes the burden of the Lord is very heavy. The prophets have to denounce woe upon woe, with terrible monotony of threat, and then it is that God hastens to relieve them by giving them a gracious word, so that they may refresh their hearts, and not be altogether crushed beneath their load. We have an instance here of the Lord's care for His heralds. Hosea was bound to say, in the name of the Lord, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away," but when he had said *that*, with heavy heart and tearful eye, he was allowed to add, "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah." The Lord will not let our spirit fail beneath a burden which is all of grief, but He will grant us the high privilege of proclaiming grace, as well as publishing judgment. Dear brethren in Christ, if you have to preach God's word, preach it faithfully, and abate no syllable of its stern threats. Woe unto him who is afraid to preach the terrors of the Lord! Woe unto the man, who refuses to put his hand into the bitter box, and take out the wormwood and gall which make such salutary medicine for the souls of men! We must at times speak lightning, and prove ourselves sons of thunder. We must bring on the storm and tempest in the heart of man, if fair summer-tide discoursing will not touch them. For the most of men there is no going to heaven except by the Weeping Cross, and we must drive them that way with God's thundering sentences of judgment. Let us lead them by the path of sorrow to the Man of sorrows, sorrowing ourselves because it is so hard to bring them to a godly sorrow. It is at our soul's peril that we allow a warning to lie silent. "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish; but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." Let us think of that, and give ourselves up to our Master's work, even when it is heaviest, cheered by the fact that we have to speak of such glorious truths, such precious promises, such a gracious Christ, such a free salvation, such full pardon for the very chief of sinners, such abundant help for those that have no strength, such fatherly compassion to those that are out of the way. Our themes of joy by far outweigh our topics of grief, and we find the Lord's service a happy one.

The connection of our text suggests the thought that *there is a limit to the long-suffering of God*. He bade Hosea say, "I will no more have mercy upon Israel." He had borne with that guilty people very long, and overlooked their daring crimes, but He would do so no longer; He would give them over to the enemy, who would carry them far away, so that Israel as a distinct monarchy should cease to be. O my hearers, God is very gracious, but His Spirit shall not always strive with you. A little more sin, and you may be over the boundary, and God may give you up. Stop, I pray you! Do not further provoke. Repent, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

Having made that observation, I would make another, namely, that *the Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the sovereignty of His grace*. "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel: but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah." Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah, also! Indeed He might justly have done so, but He delights in mercy. Many sin, and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin; they believe not in Christ, and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart, upon multitudes that could not be saved on any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The prerogative of mercy is vested in the sovereignty of God; that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases, and He has a right to do so, since none have any

claim upon Him. We are all under His rule, and by that rule we are under condemnation, and if He should leave us there, it would be strictly just, but if any are saved it is an act of pure, undeserved grace, for which He is to have all the praise.

Note, too, that even in the dark times, when whole nations go astray from Him, *He still reserves unto Himself a people.* "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them." God will have a people even when those who are called His people prove unworthy of the name. There never was a night so dark but that God had a star shining through its blackness. There never was a desert so dreary but God could lead a people through it, and make the wilderness rejoice. There never shall be a time in which Christ will not have a remnant according to the election of grace, who will maintain His truth and the honor of His name. Let us be comforted by this, and look for brighter and better times, however dark the days may seem to be just now. God will save His own, and by His own will keep His glory bright among men.

But now the text brings us to consider this fact, that, *God will save His own people in His own way.* He tells us positively how He will save the house of Judah, and negatively how He will not save them. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." God displays His sovereignty not only in the persons saved, but in the ways whereby that salvation is worked out.

The point which we shall consider is God's way of saving His people, as instanced in the text, and we remark, first, *that oftentimes God puts visible means aside in dealing with His people,* "Not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." Secondly, He has *good reasons for doing this;* He acts with infinite wisdom. Thirdly, *there is a gospel in this,* a gospel which has special relation to us. Oh, for a blessing from the Spirit of the Lord!

I. First, then, GOD IS PLEASED VERY OFTEN, IN WORKING SALVATION, TO PUT MEANS ASIDE. He said of Israel, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezebel." He thus struck out of the hands of His people their only defense; they had trusted in their bow, and the Lord destroyed it.

First, *the Lord does this in the work of salvation by grace.* Salvation is of the Lord alone. Salvation is not of human merit, for there is no such thing. Plenty of demerit you can find anywhere and everywhere, but of merit there is none. "When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants: we have done no more than it was our duty to have done." But we have not done all. Alas! On the contrary, we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone the things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us. In ourselves we have neither health, help, nor hope. We are not, we cannot be, saved by our works. We dismiss the idea with an honest indignation, each one of us for himself. Neither are we saved by any good dispositions which lie dormant and latent within us, for there are no such things. There is none good, no not one. The heart is, in every case, deceitful, and desperately wicked. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. If our salvation depended upon our hearts going after God of themselves, and the motions of our nature ascending towards the Most High of themselves, it would be a hopeless case. But divine grace waits not for man; neither tarries for the sons of men. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." The first movement is from God to us, not from us to God. As soon expect the darkness to create the day as expect the sinner to turn his own heart to the Lord. We are saved by the Lord's grace, not by our works, nor by our feelings, nor by our desires, nor even by our sense of need. I believe it is one object of God's infinite wisdom in each individual case to make this doctrine clear to the understanding and the heart. Certainly it is one object of every faithful ministry. We preach down the creature, and preach up the Savior. Yet, preach as we may, self-righteousness is so natural to man, self-trust is so congenial to our proud imbecility, that we cannot get it out of men till the Holy Spirit comes. Every man his own Savior is the kind of doctrine which is popular, but to set aside our own doings is to offend many. I see before me a picture which was once before the mind of Isaiah. Our nature seems like a rainbow-colored field of grass in the early days of summer. The golden kingcups are intermingled with flowers of every hue. What a luxuriant garden! Wait a moment! A wind comes—a hot sirocco burns its deadly way. "The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people are grass." So have we seen men glorious in their own self-righteousness, boastful of their moral purity and we have half thought, surely there is something in all this! We walk over the same field after the withering work of the Holy Spirit has been there, and men

have been convicted of sin, and we see nothing but disappointment, and hear nothing but confession of failure. We see no flowers, but dead, withered grass. How soon has the glory departed! The comeliness of the field is passed away as in the twinkling of an eye!

You cannot have forgotten, some of you, when this terrible self-withering happened to you. When God's rebukes corrected you, your beauty passed away as the moth. Before I was instructed as to myself, I thought myself as good a fellow as could be found within fifty miles, but when the Spirit of God had revealed me to myself, I thought myself the basest creature within five hundred miles, or, for that matter, even outside or inside of hell itself. You may, perhaps, have seen a picture drawn by a cunning artist. It represents a lady, very fair and beautiful to look upon, but the picture is so contrived that you discover underneath it the form of death. That which appeared outwardly so lovely is only a veiled skeleton. Just that kind of change the Spirit of God makes upon our moral beauty; He turns it into corruption by making us see what we really are. The bones of the skeleton of depraved nature stand out through the proud flesh of our self-righteous pride. Then we cry to God for mercy. Then we give up all idea of saving ourselves. Neither bow, nor sword, nor horse, nor horsemen, are any longer our confidence. The weapons of our self-help are looked upon by us as weapons of rebellion—and they really are so, and we throw them away, and will have nothing further to do with them. The man upon whom there is found a bad coin is very earnest in declaring that it is none of his, somebody must have slipped it into his pocket. He will not own it. A little while ago he thought to himself, "What a splendid imitation it is! How well I have cheated the Queen!" Self-righteousness is nothing but a piece of counterfeit coin, and when all goes well with us, we say, "How well I have done it! How splendid is my righteousness!" But when the Spirit of God arrests us, then we are anxious to get rid of the very thing wherein we gloried. What was our righteousness we reckon to be as filthy rags—and we reckon according to truth. Thus God saves us, not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen, but by His grace, which comes to us freely when Jesus is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

It is so in the actual salvation of men, and *it is often so in their calling to this salvation*. Was any man ever converted in the way in which he expected to be? I hardly think so. I know what you thought would happen; at least I know what many expect. They look for an interesting incident. They suppose, perhaps, that they will have a very wonderful dream, or that, going to hear a minister, there will be something very striking in the sermon which will alarm or depress them, so that they will be tempted to commit suicide, or do some other outrageous thing. Possibly, on the other hand, they half expect that there will happen, a sudden death in the family, or sickness upon many, and that so they will be impressed. Or, possibly, like Martin Luther with his friend Alexis, they may be walking out in a thunder-storm, and Alexis will be killed, and they will be aroused in that way. I, myself, always looked for something very remarkable, but it did not come to me. And yet something happened which was more remarkable than the most remarkable thing would have been; I simply heard the gospel command, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." I looked and I lived, and that is all the story I have to tell you. Dear hearer, that is all the story, very likely, you will ever have to tell. You have come in here tonight, and perhaps you have even desired that something very wonderful may take place. Nothing of the sort may happen, and yet the infinite mercy of God may visit your heart and sweetly melt it. Before ever you are aware, you may say to yourself—

*"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me,"*

and, on a sudden, that change will come over you of which you have so often heard—by no means the physical change which you have looked for, the extravagant delirium of sorrow struggling with delight. You will simply drop into the arms of Christ, and rest in His great sacrifice, and find peace. That will be all. You will not be saved by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen, but by a simple trust in the Lord alone. What more do you want? What more can you hope to receive?

I feel very grateful to God whenever a person attributes his conversion to me. I feel both honored and humbled. But if you are brought to the Lord Jesus, and no word of mine shall be used, but only that still small voice which speaks in solemn silence to the heart, I shall be equally pleased, so long as you are saved. If hungry souls receive the bread of heaven, I will not fret because they took it from some other hand than mine. Oh, that even now the Lord Himself might come like the dew which falls in its own special way, and may He refresh your hearts unto eternal life, and fulfill this word, "I will save

them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

In the next place, the same thing is true with regard to *the progress of religion, and the work of revivals*. Let every man work as he feels called to do, provided he follows the rules of his Lord, but we have seen revivals of which it was said at the first, "We will get up a revival." Revivals can be got up, but are they worth the trouble? What has been the end of them all? A few years after, the result, where is it? I hear an echo say, "Where is it?" I cannot tell you what has become of it; in many cases I fear that the disappointed church has become harder to stir than it was before. Brethren, I hopefully believe that there will soon come a deep, widespread, lasting revival of religion, and it may be it will come just as it used to in apostolic times. How did they act in Jerusalem? What did they do throughout Asia Minor? What was the apostles' plan? I cannot find, for the life of me, that they did anything else but preach the gospel, while at the same time they went from house to house, and held meetings for prayer, and thus the kingdom of Christ came. They did not work up a revival, but they prayed it down. They simply waited upon the Lord in supplication and service. They might have tried other plans had they been so unwise as to think of them. They would never have tolerated the dodges of the present period, the adaptations of the gospel, and the degrading of it, by secular lectures, entertainments, and so forth. They never dreamed of keeping abreast of the times with liberal philosophical teaching, but I recollect that Paul was so resolutely ignorant as to say, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Standing all together the chosen preachers of the first days could assert—"We preach Christ crucified." They could all say *that*, and say it emphatically. All the men of the college of the apostles stuck to that theme, and see the effect!—

*"Nations, the learned and the rude,
Were by these heavenly arms subdued,
While Satan raging at his loss,
Abhorred the doctrine of the cross."*

I wish all the churches would try this old way again, for it seems to me that the world will never be subdued to Christ by the wooden sword of reason, but only by the true Jerusalem blade of a gospel revealed from heaven. Until we take up such methods as our Lord has ordained and make our sole confidence to be in the Lord our God, who "will not save by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen," we shall never see great results. Grand preaching, fine preaching, eloquent preaching! Yes, but the apostle was afraid of it, lest the faith of his converts should stand in the wisdom of men. Though he could have spoken with the tongue of an orator, he did not use the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of no effect.

"But, surely," cries one, "we must have some advancement in theology. We ought to know more than our old fathers did." This is the pride of our hearts. Would you advance beyond the apostles? Into what can you advance but into the ditch of error? They did not crave for an advance in the apostolic times, but they were satisfied to speak over again "all the words of this life." They remained true to the "faith once and for all delivered to the saints," and they found salvation in this primitive revelation. Why should we go gadding elsewhere? Depend upon it God will not save men by advanced thought, nor by eloquent discourses, nor by literary beauties; He "will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

I believe that the same great truth will be made apparent *as to the establishment of the truth of God in this land*. How my soul has been burdened with the many that have turned aside, and the few that remain faithful to the covenant God of Israel! These last are not so very few as some would make them out to be, but yet they are sadly scant in number. God has reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal. Oh, that there were a thousand times as many! But we have striven with all our might to bear our outspoken testimony for the old faith, and we have hopefully thought, that many would rally to the cry, but it is not so, nor, perhaps, is it God's mind that it should be. Men of eminence have held their tongues, and brethren once ardent for the gospel have practically gone over to the enemy. I am sure that the Lord will confound the adversary, and bring forth His truth as the noonday; but it may not be as we would suggest. He has His own way; let us watch for Him to make bare His arm. Perhaps those who are faithful must stand alone, must bear their witness in solitary places, and be the objects of general derision. Perhaps for many a year the heavenly fire will only smolder amidst the ash-

es. But it is all right; truth shall hold the crown of the causeway yet, and Christ's own word shall lift its head from the waves that have washed over it, and be the fairer for the washing; for the truth has God's might with it, and it must prevail. He "will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." We must be content to subside; to be nothing; to be never heard of; to die. So be it if the truth shall live. This will be better than if we formed a numerous band, and carried everything by majorities, and set up a strong party, and won the day, for then man might be great, and God be forgotten, but now He shall be all in all. When you have seen how I fail, and those that are with me, and how plans and efforts are futile, you will all the more clearly see what the Lord can do.

Dear friends, I would make one other application of these words, and I trust it may be profitable to you. *The text has a voice to God's people in the day of trouble.* I may be addressing godly people who are in most terrible distress. You have faith in God that He will bring you out of your affliction. Maintain that faith, and if for a long time no deliverance should come, still maintain it. Perhaps you have hopes from a certain quarter. Those hopes may come to nothing; that cistern will leak. You have another friend to whom you can apply. Yes, you can apply; that is all that will happen, for that tank also holds no water. When you have tried all the cisterns, be wise enough to recollect the fountain. It may be that there will come a day when every door will be fast closed, and you will see no way of relief whatever, but then you will remember that there will remain the one way, which you should have followed at the first. In such an hour let my text speak with you, "He will save them by the Lord their God, and He will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." What a glorious vision is that of Jehovah alone with His own right hand getting to Himself the victory! When Israel came out of Egypt, what armies vanquished Pharaoh? Who fought on Israel's side to bring them out of Egypt? Nobody. Then there was no human victor to extol, no human warrior to praise, but clear and plain the hymn rang out—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." If there had been an ally with God the glory might have been divided, but as it was, the Lord alone was exalted in that day. When Israel fought with Amalek it is evident that the battle never depended upon their fighting, for—

*"While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed!"*

So that the real fighting was done by those uplifted hands that brought down the divine success, and made Joshua mighty in the battle. When Israel crossed the Jordan, and came into the Promised Land to fight the Canaanites, the very first conquest was that of Jericho. Did they bring battering-rams to the walls? Did they gradually throw down the structure with their axes and picks? Oh, no! They compassed the city seven days, and God made the walls to fall when the people gave a shout. In the memorable deliverances of God's people, God has said to the second cause, "Stand back; let My glory come to the front." The bow, the sword, the battle, the horses, and the horsemen, He has sent them all about their business, and then the Lord their God has led the van, and His enemies have been scattered like the dust of the threshing floor. When He takes up the quarrel of His covenant He makes short work of it, for "the Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is His name," and when He lays bare His arm to defend the cause of His people, He wants no helpers. Now can you lean on the Lord? Can you grasp the Invisible? Can you lean *alone* on God, and forego all helpers? Can you grasp His bared arm, and let all other things go? O man of God, if you can, you shall glorify God, and you shall surely be delivered! If you must have your bow and your sword, or else give up hope, then the battle rests with yourself. How can you plead the promise of God? But when you put the bow aside, and the sword is hung on the wall, then can you go to Him who is better to you than bow and sword, and rest in Him, and He will work gloriously, so that His own name shall be magnified, and you shall be blessed. I pray the Holy Spirit to apply that truth to any heart here that is heavy by reason of sore conflict at this time. Oh, for grace to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for in His own time and way He will work, and none shall hinder Him.

So much upon our first point, that oftentimes God puts the means aside in dealing with His people.

II. But now, secondly, God has GOOD REASONS FOR THIS. I shall very briefly touch upon this theme. The Lord is full of wisdom, and His doings are ever prudent. He always has good reasons for everything, but one of the things we should never do is, to ask His reasons. It is an unreasonable thing to

ask God to give reasons for what He does. His answer to arrogant questioners is—"May I not do as I will with My own?" Oh for grace to be silent where God is silent! Is He not God, and we worms of the dust? Who shall presume to ask Him why or what He does? Better far to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good." If He never gave us a reason for what He did, we ought to be well content to leave all with Him, knowing that He must do that which is best and wisest.

But, so far as in humility we may dare to look, we have looked, and we believe that the Lord's ways are intended, first, *to prevent all boasting*. How prone we are to self-esteem! How wickedly we rob God to honor ourselves! If God uses *us*—if God uses any sort of means—yet there is no credit to the means which He uses, but to Himself only. I read the other day of a certain writer who says, "I wrote the four hundred pages of this book with one pen." Where is that pen? Does anybody want it? If it were advertised as an exhibition, I should not go to see it. I care a deal more for the hand that wrote, and for what was written, than for the pen with which it was written. A common goose-quill it was in the case referred to, and no more. Ah, how plainly can we see where the quill came from! God uses men for a certain purpose, as we use a hammer, or a saw, or an awl. Suppose that when we had done with such tools, and put them back into the box, they all began to cry, "See what we have done! What a sharp saw I was! What a heavy hammer I was! Did I not hit the nail on the head?" Such boastings would be foolishness. Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews with it? We do not judge that the instrument ought to take credit to itself, but it does so in our case whenever it can, and this is a great injury to us. Some of us might have enjoyed a much larger blessing, if we had not grown top-heavy with the blessing we already enjoyed. God saved a soul or two by you, my dear friend, and you began to rub your hands, and think that you were something better than an angel. You were running away with God's glory, and thus ending your own influence. Often this is the cause of the drying up of hopeful usefulness. The instrument began to exalt itself, and so the Lord put up the bow, the sword, the horses and the horsemen, and then all men saw what powerless things these were. Oh, that the Lord may never feel compelled to leave you and me to ourselves! Oh, that He may deign to honor us by using us to His glory. I had far rather die than stand a withered tree in the vineyard of the Lord, and yet, what better should I be if He withdrew the dew of His grace from me?

Next, He does this *to take us off from all reliance upon second causes and outward means*. You people of God, the process of weaning is, with you, full often a long and tedious one, but if ever it is accomplished, your faith will rejoice, even as Abraham made a great feast at Isaac's weaning.

My dear hearers, some of you are not saved yet, and I will tell you what happens with many of you. You come here on Sabbath days, and to Monday prayer meetings, and Thursday services, and I am glad to see you. You also read your Bibles; I am glad of that. You say a thing you call a prayer; I do not know whether I am glad about *that*. But I will tell you what you are doing. You are making yourselves quite comfortable, as if, by some singular process, salvation would insensibly penetrate you by your being found in good company, hearing the Word, and so on. Let me remind you that these things were never prescribed as the way of salvation. I do not want you to run away from hearing the Word, or from the use of the means, but I do want to assure you that, if you trust in these means, you will be disappointed in the result. These are mere pitchers, but they will not quench your thirst if there is no water in them. Look to God, not to your minister. Get to Jesus Himself rather than to the sacred Book. Remember how the Savior puts it—for this is not a wrested reading—"You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: but you will not come to Me that you might have life." Pass beyond the Scriptures to the Christ whom the Scriptures reveal. Do not stay in the porch of the Word, but enter the house of the truth itself, which is Christ Jesus. It is not singing hymns and saying prayers; it is getting to the Lord in praise and really coming to Christ in prayer. I wish you not to stay away from any of the services; I wish you to be where the means may be blessed to you, but the means of themselves cannot save you. There is nothing in preaching—there is nothing in public service that can mechanically bring salvation to you, and do not expect it. "You must be born again!" You must distinctly go to Christ for yourselves, for the Lord saves men by the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will not save them by books, and prayer meetings, and sermons any more than He would save Judah by the bow, the sword, the battle, the horses, and the horsemen. The Lord set aside horse and horsemen to bring the people to Himself, and often He lays people up so that they cannot get out to hear the minister, or He drafts them away to some portion of the

country where they get no sermon, that then they may go to the God of all true sermons, and may find salvation in Jesus Christ Himself.

Again, beloved, the Lord blesses His people Himself *that He may endear Himself to them*. He reveals Himself to them apart from other things, that they may see *Him* and know what *He* can do. You do not know to the full what God can do so long as He keeps within the bounds of the ordinary means, or you feel that you are well provided for by ordinary methods. You are apt to forget that *God* provides for you, because your quarterly allowance is received so regularly. Now, suppose that your business fails. Ah! Then God must provide for you; then you will see what God is doing. Suppose that, instead of being in one place, you should be kicked about like a football, and still the Lord should give you rest in Himself; then you will see what He can do. When we are in fine feather, and everybody is kind to us, we hardly know the loving kindness of the Lord; it is so smothered up by secondary agencies. When we get quite alone, and nobody is kind to us, and we approach to the Lord in solitary trust, and prove His power to comfort us, then we know more of what He is in Himself to His people. The night reveals the stars, and sorrow and loneliness manifest the Lord's presence. But, beloved, God does this to endear Himself to us, that seeing more of Him we may love Him more, and may say to ourselves, "What a gracious God He is to take notice of me, to interpose for me, to come and, by His own mighty power, do for me what the ordinary ways and means fail to do!" In this way also the Lord often gives a double blessing—a blessing in the gift, and a blessing in the way of giving.

Now look at Hezekiah's case. Supposing Hezekiah had gone out to fight Sennacherib, and had defeated him, a certain number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been killed in the battle, but when the Lord delivered Hezekiah without a battle, then there were no funerals in Jerusalem. Nobody was wounded; nobody was slain. So frequently God not only blesses us by the favor given, but by the way in which the gift is sent; He saves us from pains which any other method would have involved. The Lord often spares us the humiliation of being dependent upon a person who would have made his patronage bitter to us. If we had received the blessing through some great one, he might have crowded over us all the rest of his life. I like that bit in Abraham's life when the king of Sodom offered him the property which he had captured. Abraham had a right to it, for he had taken it in war, but he said, "I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich." No, no; the servant of the Lord would not have a king talk as if he had been the maker of the Lord's own servant. God Himself will so help you, so bless you, so carry you through that you shall not have to take off your hat to any king of Sodom; neither shall he be able to go up and down the city and say, "I have made Abram rich." God will put the king of Sodom away with the horses and the horsemen, and double the mercy to you by handing it out with His own hand after His own way.

I think that the Lord does this also *to encourage you in all future troubles*; He has rescued you in a way beyond means, without means, and even against means, and therefore you cannot be in a condition from which He will be unable to rescue you. If you should come to be more friendless and feebler than you now are—what then? Are your resources within yourself or dependent upon friends? If so, you are in an evil case. But if all your supplies are in the Lord, you are no worse off than you used to be. When the Lord strips you bare of your own garments, then you can go to His wardrobe and put on the raiment which He has provided. You cannot wear God's clothes while you glory that you are wearing your own. When want has swept your table, then all the bread on it will come from your God. When the Lord has brought you down to the bare rock, then you can go no lower, and there is a chance to build a house which will stand against flood and wind. Be reliant upon Him who can work by means, but can equally well work without means whenever it seems good in His sight! In such confidence you will find security against all ill weathers. The Lord changes not, and therefore you shall not be consumed.

III. My time is done, or else I was going to say, thirdly, THERE IS A GOSPEL IN THIS TEXT for those here present. I can only hint at this in a few words.

The first gospel is that *salvation is possible in every case*. Notice, "I will save them." What can stand against a divine "I will"? With God nothing is impossible. If there is nothing to help Him, what does it matter? He does not need help. He expressly abjures the aid of a creature when He says, "I will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen." My dear hearer, whoever you may be, there is hope in your case; if God saves, then you can be saved. If you had to save yourself, you

would not be saved, but as there is nothing wanted of you, but God works salvation with His own right hand, your case is hopeful. How clear is this! And how bright with comfort!

Next, *salvation is to be sought of God alone*. Do not go wandering about to the second cause. Go straight to the Lord Himself, and go at once. Straightforward is the best running in the world. Go straightforward to your God, your Savior. Let there be no waiting for tears, feelings, repentance, sanctification, or anything else; but arise at once, and go to your God, and for Christ's sake plead with Him to have mercy upon you at this moment. As salvation does not necessarily come through the outward means, if I address any here who have neglected the outward means, let them come away to God at once, though they have neglected His courts, profaned His day, and despised His ministers. You came in here with no idea of worshipping God, but only just to see the place, and what the preacher is like. Never mind, look to the Lord Jesus Christ straight away! With those eyes that are so blinded, look! If you cannot see, it may be that in your obedient attempt to look, the Lord will give you sight. He does not command you to *see*, but He does command you to *look* to Him and be saved; so that, if you turn your eyes towards Jesus, though they be sightless eyeballs, He will make them see. If you will trust in Christ you may cast your guilty soul on Him at this moment. Why should you not do so? Then for you the rain will be over and gone, and you will see the bright light in the clouds. Instead of the dark and dismal winter of doubt, you shall have a summertime of hope and comfort. These dreary weeks of cold despair shall give place to a season in which heaven and earth shall blend in your experience in a joy unspeakable. The Lord grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 CHRONICLES 32.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103 (VERSION 1), 138, 211.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—I am still somewhat like Mephibosheth, who “did eat continually at the king’s table, and was lame on both his feet”; but the fine summer weather of this place, and the complete rest, are rapidly restoring me. I ask prayer that strength may return in such a way as to remain with me, that I may, for a long period afterwards, abide in my work; as also that the divine blessing may rest on the preaching of the Word.

I have great cause for gratitude because of the continual items of news which I receive concerning the influence of the sermons. This is a rare restorative. May my readers still find in these simple discourses food for their souls, and comfort for their hearts. When they distribute them among the unsaved, may the Spirit of God make them to minister life to the spiritually dead.

I am most happy in being remembered in the prayers of many saints, and I would beg for more intercession, not for myself only, but for all who truly preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, Dec. 8th, 1888

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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